NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
POLITICAL FEATURE NO. 1-9935 JANUARY 9, 1976
JOSEPH SULLIVAN

CHINA SCHOLARS ON CHOU EN-LAI

ANNCR:

FOREIGN OBSERVERS WILL BE CLOSELY WATCHING FOR SIGNS OF WHAT, IF ANY, IMPACT THE DEATH OF CHINESE PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI HAS ON THE PEKING POLITICAL SCENE AND CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY. VOA'S JOSEPH SULLIVAN DISCUSSED CHOU'S PASSING WITH THREE PROMINENT AMERICAN SCHOLARS IN CHINESE AFFAIRS, AND HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR VIEWS.

VOICE:

THE INEVITABLE QUESTION IS WHAT CHOU EN-LAI'S ABSENCE MEANS FOR CHINA, PARTICULARLY IN THE POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE POST-MAO TSE-TUNG PERIOD. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PROFESSOR, ALAN WHITING, BELIEVES CHOU'S DEATH DOESN'T MEAN MUCH, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM. THE CHINESE, HE SAYS, HAVE ANTICIPATED CHOU'S DEMISE AND HAVE MOVED WHAT HE CALLED THE "TRANSITIONAL COMMAND POSITION" TO VICE PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING. AND HE SEES NO LIKELIHOOD THAT THERE WILL BE AN IMMEDIATE LOSS OF DIRECTION OR POLICY IN PEKING.

NEVERTHELESS, PROFESSOR WHITING BELIEVES THAT CHOU EN-LAI'S LOSS IS INCALCULABLE WHEN ONE THINKS OF THE RESOURCE THAT HE OFFERED CHINA.

TAPE CUT ONE -- WHITING

"HE WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST ONE OF THE GREAT STATESMEN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. BEGINNING IN CHUNGKING IN 1942, HE WAS THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. AFTER THE ISOLATION OF THE KOREAN WAR AND THE EARLY FIFTIES, HE AGAIN MOVED CHINA INTO THE WORLD SCENE WHEN IT WAS NOT YET A WORLD POWER...FIRST IN GENEVA IN 1954 AND IN BANDUNG IN 1955. HE BECAME THE CHIEF INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN MOSCOW AND EAST EUROPEAN CAPITALS DURING THE CRISIS OF 1955 AND 1956, WHEN THE QUESTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN POLAND AND HUNGARY ON THE ONE HAND AND THE SOVIET UNION ON THE OTHER THREATENED TO BREAK THE COMMUNIST BLOC APART.

HE WAS AN INDEFATIGABLE DIPLOMAT, TRAVELLING THROUGHOUT AFRICA AND ASIA IN THE DECADE 1955 AND 1965."

VOICE:

PROFESSOR WHITING OBSERVES THAT MEN LIKE NEHRU, NASSER, SIHANOUK AND KISSINGER BECAME PERSONALLY ENAMORED OF CHOU EN-LAI'S SUBTLE AND SOPHISTICATED MIND AND HIS ABILITY TO GIVE AN APPEARANCE OF CANDOR WITHOUT COMPROMISING CHINA'S POSITION. AMERICANS, HE SAYS, LEARNED MORE FROM CHOU'S INTERVIEW WITH JAMES RESTON OF THE "NEW YORK TIMES" IN AUGUST 1971 AS TO WHAT WAS REALLY BEHIND THE CHINESE MOVE TOWARD RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES THAN FROM ANY OTHER SINGLE SOURCE OR SITUATION.

TAPE CUT TWO -- WHITING

"IN FACT, I'M NOT SURE THAT SINO-AMERICAN DETENTE COULD HAVE BEEN DONE WITHOUT CHOU'S PRE-EMINENT POSITION ON THE CHINESE SIDE. YOU MUST ADD TO HIS STATESMAN'S RECORD THE INCREDIBLE ROLE HE PERFORMED IN CHINA, BEGINNING IN 1949 AND CULMINATING PERHAPS WITH THE CHAOS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, THROUGH WHICH HE STEERED THAT SHIP OF STATE. HE WAS MAO'S LIEUTENANT TO BE SURE, BUT IT WAS CHOU EN-LAI WHO HAD THE PERSONAL CONFIDENCE AND CREDIBILITY IN THE SYSTEM THAT HELD THE BUREAUCRACY TOGETHER AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF THE LEFT. IN THE WORST OF THE MAO CULT SCENES, CHOU EN-LAI MAINTAINED A SENSE OF DIGNITY, PATRIOTIC CONCERN, AND RESPECT FOR CHINESE INSTITUTIONS. THIS, I THINK, TRULY MAKES HIM AN IRREPLACEABLE ASSET."

VOICE:

PROFESSOR FRANZ MICHAEL -- DIRECTOR OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY'S SINO-SOVIET INSTITUTE -- SAYS THAT CHOU EN-LAI'S DEATH ENDS AN IMPORTANT PERIOD IN CHINESE COMMUNIST HISTORY. CHOU, HE NOTES, WAS THE GREAT MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE VARIOUS FORCES IN CHINA AND HELD THE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT TOGETHER. NONETHELESS, PROFESSOR MICHAEL AGREES WITH PROFESSOR WHITING THAT CHOU'S PASSING WILL NOT HAVE AN IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON THE POLITICAL SCENE, GIVEN THE FACT THAT

OTHER ADMINISTRATORS, INCLUDING VICE PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING, HAVE BEEN PLACED IN AT LEAST A TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITION.

PROFESSOR MICHAEL ADDS THESE REFLECTIONS ON CHOU EN-LAI'S PLACE IN HISTORY:

TAPE CUT THREE -- MICHAEL

"I REGARDED CHOU AS A BRILLIANT COMMUNIST...AS AN EXTREMELY FLEXIBLE PERSON, WHO IN HIS CAREER VERY OFTEN SHIFTED RATHER RADICALLY, AND CAPABLE OF TAKING ORDERS THAT WOULD TURN THE CAUSE IN QUITE A DIFFERENT DIRECTION. HIS FIRST DECISIVE MOVE PERHAPS WAS IN 1936 AT THE TSUNYI CONFERENCE. CHOU AT THAT TIME WAS A RANKING MILITARY FIGURE AND THEREFORE A KEY FIGURE IN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY ORGANIZATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE "GREAT MARCH" FROM THE KIANGSI SOVIET TO YENAN. MAO TSE-TUNG CHALLENGED HIS LEADERSHIP, AND CHOU RELENTED WITHOUT RESISTANCE. AND FROM THAT TIME ON CHOU HAS BEEN THE NUMBER TWO MAN. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A KEY FIGURE IN COMMUNIST POLICY DETERMINATION AND ESPECIALLY SO IN THE LAST YEARS IN THE CONFLICT WITH MOSCOW AND THE ATTEMPT OF THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS TO BUILD UP AN INTERNATIONAL POSITION INDEPENDENT OF MOSCOW. SO, THESE, I BELIEVE, HAVE BEEN HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS."

VOICE:

DOCTOR A. DOAK BARNETT -- A SENIOR FELLOW AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION IN WASHINGTON -- SAYS IT'S BEEN CLEAR FOR THE LAST TWO OR THREE YEARS THAT THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN DOING ALL IT COULD TO PREPARE FOR THE PASSING OF CHOU EN-LAI AND MAO TSE-TUNG...THAT MANY OF THE ADJUSTMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE NEW TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY FOR SOME TIME. AND THIS, HE BELIEVES, INCREASES THE CHANCES THAT IT WILL BE A SMOOTH TRANSITION COMPARED TO TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO, IF CHOU AND MAO HAD SUDDENLY PASSED FROM THE PICTURE THEN. NONETHELESS, DOCTOR BARNETT PREDICTS THAT CHOU'S DEATH WILL HAVE A DISCERNIBLE EFFECT ON THE PEKING POLITICAL SCENE.

TAPE CUT FOUR -- BARNETT

"IT'S OBVIOUSLY A TREMENDOUS EVENT IN THE SENSE THAT FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY THERE HAVE BEEN TWO TOWERING FIGURES IN CHINA...MAO AND CHOU. MAO HAS PROVIDED THE SYMBOL OF THE REVOLUTION AND CHOU HAS BEEN A FORCE FOR STABILITY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION AND DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY. SO, REMOVING A MAN LIKE THIS FROM THE SCENE...THE PASSING OF A MAN LIKE THIS FROM THE SCENE...FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGES THE CHEMISTRY OF POLITICS IN CHINA IN MANY RESPECTS."

ANNCR:

THE REFLECTIONS OF THREE AMERICAN SCHOLARS IN CHINESE AFFAIRS ON THE LIFE OF CHINESE PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI, WHO DIED IN PEKING THIS WEEK.

GH/RCS